THE FIRST SETTLER IN HILLSBORO

A Biography of John McNeel

By Elizabeth C. Sheet

John McNeel was born in Frederick county, Virginia, in 1745, and passed much of his early life in Cumberland, Maryland.

Mr. McNeel seemed to be fond of athletics and in a contest his antagonist was badly injured. To avoid arrest and trial for murder he fled and followed the trend of the Alleghenies. A long while was spent in the wilderness without much food, causing suffering of the mind and the shape his body was in cannot be imagined by any of us. Finally going deeper and deeper into the Wilderness, he came at last in view of the Levels in 1765.

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Here Mr. McNeel prayed over his guilt and prayed with a broken heart, and hunted for food, subsisting mostly on venison and trout.

One day while hunting he met Charles and Edward Kennison from his old home, who had come here prospecting for a situation. From these men he learned that the man he had been boxing with was not killed and not even seriously hurt. This was indeed good news to him, because he felt free from all bloody stains.

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Mr. McNeel shared his cabin with his friends and helped them clear a tract of land adjoining his tract. The three then set out for the lower valley of Virginia.

While visiting home John McNeel married Martha Davis who was born in Wales in 1740. Shortly after their marriage they came out to Levels, A few acres was soon cleared off, and plenty to subsist upon was raised.

Mr. McNeel was deeply impressed with a sense of gratitude to God for his care, and after all to fall into such a wealthy place that he built a place for worship, the White Pole

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In a few years the Dunmore war opened up. McNeel and the two Kennisons went into camp at Lewisburg and joined the expedition at Point Pleasant, October 10. 1774. They went across the Eastern mountain and enlisted in same company that went from Frederick county, served through the Revolution and then took up the peaceful trend of their lives where they had left off.

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While Mr. McNeel was at Point Pleasant a child was born and died before his return. The mother with her own hands prepared the coffin and grave and buried it.

They reared five children, two sons and three daughters. Each of these children were married and reared large families.

Mr. McNeel was the first man to settle in Little Levels when only twenty years of age. Mr. McNeel also laid the foundation of the Methodist church and first established Methodism in Pocahontas county.

Mrs. John McNeel laid the first body to rest in the McNeel graveyard Mr. McNeel lived to be eighty years of age and died in 1825.

KNAPPS CREEK